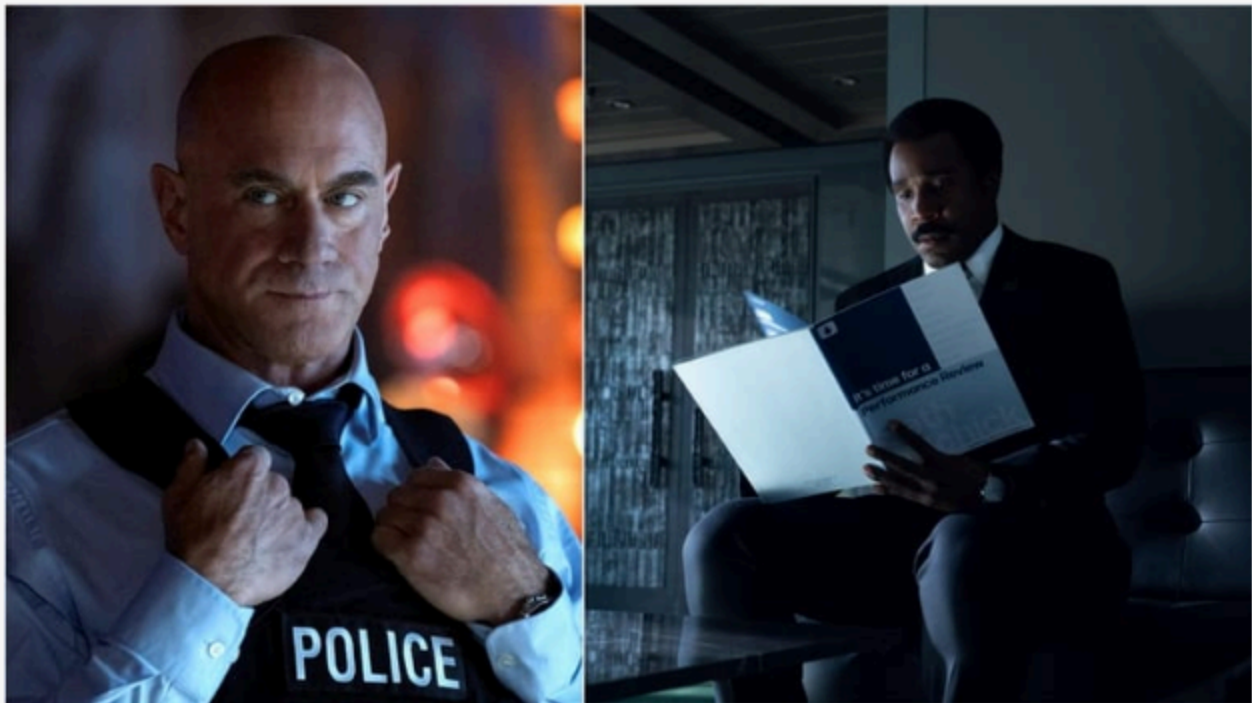


NEWSDAY

ENTERTAINMENT TV

North Fork TV Festival honoring Christopher Meloni and Tramell Tillman



Christopher Meloni, left, and Tramell Tillman are honorees at this year's North Fork TV Festival. Credit: Peacock / Virginia Sherwood; Apple TV+

[The North Fork TV Festival](#) turns 10 on Tuesday with a twist — or two — to mark that notable milestone. Under the reasonable assumption that festivals bring out the stars, and the stars bring out the attendees, the North Fork — which will be held at the Sound View in Greenport on Tuesday and Wednesday — offers a few additional big and emerging names this year.

At the forefront of these is Christopher Meloni, the redoubtable Elliot Stabler from the "Law & Order" universe, who is recipient of this year's Canopy Award. In addition, [Tramell Tillman — Mr. Milchick of "Severance"](#) — has been named Breakout Performance Award winner while Christopher Briney of Prime's "The Summer I Turned Pretty," which enters its third and final season this July, is the Rising Star Award winner.

Founded in 2015 by Commack native Noah Doyle and his wife Lauren — both lawyers with homes in Manhattan and Greenport — the North Fork grew rapidly in its early years thanks to a smart idea (the support of independently produced TV pilots) and favorable tail winds (the raging "Peak TV" era).

But the world has changed, and so has that "Peak TV" era, which is now just a fond memory. Those tail winds are all but gone now too. TV production in New York cratered in the wake of the writers' and actors' strikes of 2023, and has yet to recover. For the 2025-26 budget, Gov. Kathy Hochul pushed through an \$800 million-per-year refundable tax credit on TV and movie productions, or close to double 2023 levels, with the idea to lure independent productions — North Fork's sweet spot. But the tax credit boost was passed in May, and there's a long year ahead. Production remains in the doldrums, according to trade reports.

But while production is struggling, the festival business is not. Bellmore-based Long Island International Film Expo (LIIFE) turns 28 next month (July 9-13).

[Made in Huntington Film & TV Festival](#) launched this past April.

Both of these celebrate indie films as well as TV but the North Fork has remained true to the original mission — TV only. The festival received about 150 pilot submissions this year, and from those, three winners have been selected. (Those will also be screened during the two-day festival.) But with the idea that landing a job in TV is tough, and getting an audience with dealmakers is even more daunting, the festival this year added a new feature called "Behind the Pitch." For \$600, an attendee gets five 15-minute sessions with showrunners and TV execs, or as the promotional line explains "no fluff, no gatekeeping, just actionable conversations that move your career forward."

Doyle said in a phone interview that "most participants come because they want to meet or hear from someone they've seen on TV, but they also have their own stories to tell, and want to connect, and network." This version of TV pitch speed-dating, he adds, "is not just to sell your idea but to talk about your idea and get professional feedback. Those mentoring these artists — this farm team — want these people to succeed."

This year's festival will also borrow from a classic franchise, James Lipton's "Inside the Actors Studio," which aired for 22 seasons on Bravo (1994-2018)

with the final season on Ovation. The festival is calling this a "reimagined ... piano-bar-style" version of "Actors Studio." The stars at these moderated sessions will be Anna Chlumsky ("Veep"), Richard Kind ("Curb Your Enthusiasm"), Susan Kelechi Watson ("This Is Us") and Jenn Lyon ("Claws," "Justified").

What's Doyle most proud of on this 10th anniversary? "The reason I volunteer and many others keep volunteering is that we bring a community together for 48 hours and there are very few — if any — like it in the metropolitan area. If you care about scripted TV, we can meet, talk about it and experience it."

Go [here](#) for the festival schedule and [here for costs](#), which range from free to \$2,400.

